

GIOVANNI'S ROOM

Press Release

Haley Mellin

Conservation Imperatives

November 12, 2023 - December 23, 2023

Giovanni's Room is pleased to present *Conservation Imperatives*, an installation by Haley Mellin, from November 12 – December 23, 2023. This is the artist's first solo exhibition in Los Angeles and will consist of large-form wall drawings, paintings, and texts on the natural world and habitats. The exhibition's title is abbreviated from *Conservation Imperatives: Securing the Last Unprotected Terrestrial Sites Harboring Irreplaceable Biodiversity*, a forthcoming paper that the artist co-authored and is set to be published in *Frontiers*, a community-run and open-access journal. Stacks of papers by Indigenous leaders and conservation biologists will also be available for viewers to take home.

Biodiversity habitat conservation and advocating for environmental protections are central in Mellin's artistic practice and activism. As the natural environment that the artist often finds herself in is ephemeral, decaying, and malleable, *Conservation Imperatives* will undo the standard perception that an exhibition is unchanging throughout its duration. In preparation for the show, Mellin shifted the discursive space of the gallery into a studio, and the large works were made there. The content of the works will show the transitional physical condition that terrestrial landscapes are in, as they face anthropogenic conversion and destruction. The materials used, such as the artwork's frames, are sourced from recycling sites.

The exhibition will involve periodic performances on the resident piano in the gallery. Los Angeles musician Jay Israelson will perform during the opening reception. The instrument, an antique baby grand piano dating to the 1890's, is courtesy of Lindon Schultz, the architect of the gallery space. The inclusion of music and performance in the show emphasizes not only the relationship between the viewer and the object, but among participants in a communal space. The playing of music shifts the norm, as the experience of viewing art is often a relatively quiet one. No environment is a static space with completed objects – can the gallery itself not be fluid, as nature so often is?

To quote Shannon Jackson in "Seven Windows" in Harrell Fletcher's *The Best Things in Museums Are the Windows*, "Rather than conceiving of art as a thing bound by a frame or balanced atop a pedestal, art becomes most interesting as a structure for enabling interaction amongst those who engage with it." The artworks have an intertwined relationship with indigenous landback and protection work that she supports as they are made while doing this work. Mellin says, "education, art and conservation are things we do in consideration of the future." This show follows on from a 2022 solo show at The Journal Gallery which centered on Mellin's text *On Biodiversity and Betadiversity* published by Adam Marnie and F: Houston.

- Adrienne Ramsey

The artist thanks Jeremy Maldonado, Niels Kantor, Arianna Rosen, James Duncan, Jim Ringseis, Sophia Cohen, Adam Marnie, Adrienne Ramsey, Lindon Schultz, Invisible Dole, Frank Benson, Jay Israelson, Karl Burkart, Eric Dinerstein, Andy Lee, Philip Tanimoto, Marco Cerezo, Laura Stewart, Chris Jordan, Elias Barrera, Pedro Us, Sammy Owen, Kai Anderson, Fulcrum Press, Robert Price and Noon Projects.

The presentation of this series of paintings and drawings will be completed in two upcoming shows on ecology at Hauser & Wirth New York in January 2024 and at Dittrich & Schlechtriem Berlin in April 2024. An artist talk on biodiversity habitat conservation will be hosted at the gallery on November 12, 2023. Please reach out to Jeremy Maldonado for information on attending the talk or to view the recording.

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